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WORLD  
CHRISTIAN  
BOOKS II

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**JESUS**  
II

**AND HIS**

**PEOPLE**

by PAUL S. MINEAR  
III

ASSOCIATION PRESS, NEW YORK

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JESUS AND HIS PEOPLE

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## ABOUT WORLD CHRISTIAN BOOKS

TODAY it is not enough to believe; it is necessary also to understand. From every part of the world comes the demand for books that will help the Christian to understand his faith, to find the answers to the questions that he and other men are asking, and to know how to present the faith to others. The series **WORLD CHRISTIAN BOOKS** is planned to help in this particular area of Christian need. The books are directed in the first place to the "younger churches," but the old distinction between younger and older churches no longer really holds. All churches are faced by the same problems. In all countries the same questions are being asked. The series is specially planned for those who are called to preach and teach, in the hope that the materials given in these books may help them to carry out their task more effectively. But the aim has also been to write so simply that ordinary members of the church who wish to study their faith may be able to use these books as individuals or in study groups and so to grow in knowledge and understanding.

The books are being published first in English, but it is intended that as soon as possible they should be made available in the main languages of the Christian world. Writers have been chosen from various countries and various branches of the church, with special emphasis on the younger churches. This means that there will be a variety of voices, but the aim and the hope is that through many minds and many tongues the faith of the church in its one Lord may be clearly set forth.

STEPHEN NEILL  
*General Editor*

*This book is dedicated  
to my colleagues at Andover Newton  
in gratitude and affection*

## ***How to Use This Book***

PROFESSOR Paul Minear has written for us a book about the church. Yet the word "church" does not occur in the title, and is not found very often in the text. If we understand why this is so, we shall be at the right starting point for the study of the book.

It is probable that most readers of this book will be in some kind of connection with a church. But what does the word "church" mean? We sometimes use it of a building in which we worship; sometimes of the group of people who meet to worship in that building; sometimes of the fellowship of Christians over a wide area—the Church of South India; frequently of a denomination—the Lutheran Churches; sometimes of all the Christians now living in the world. The word "church" may be used and is used in all these senses. What gives these various senses their unity is that they all apply to CHRISTIAN churches. Whatever reality these groups possess derives from the fact that Jesus Christ is the Lord of them all, that he is alive and at work in them, and that he calls all his followers to be like himself. So behind the question of the church lies the question as to the relationship between Jesus Christ and those who believe in him.

This relationship is a great mystery. No single term is adequate to set it forth, and in the New Testament it is spoken of in a great variety of ways. Professor Minear has chosen eight groups of words dealing with this relationship, and has gathered together for us the New Testament teaching about them. But, as the final section of the book, "For Further Study," shows, this is only a small selection from a much wider range of terms; to have dealt with them all would have resulted in the writing of a very large book. These eight may be thought of as being like the spokes of a wheel that all run in to one center. Start on any one of these lines, follow it up, and at the center you will come to Jesus Christ the Lord.

This book can be read just as it stands. It is clear and straightforward, though the reader will soon discover that he has to read it with close attention if he is to master the argument. He will also soon discover that he will gain a great deal more from it if he reads it with the New Testament beside him, and takes time to look up all the New Testament references which are given. This takes time, but the time will be found to have been well spent. And the minister of the gospel who digs into the material will find that each chapter in this book gives him the outline not of one sermon but of several. It is the aim of the writer to direct the reader beyond his own words to the great words of the New Testament, and beyond the words of the New Testament to the living Lord of the church, Jesus Christ himself.

## ***An American Preface***

BISHOP Neill has indicated the wider objective of this book. There is, as well, a narrower purpose for readers in North America. Many of our churches are engaged in a study program under the theme, "The Nature of the Unity We Seek." As part of this program, it is entirely right that our thoughts should gravitate to the character of life in the New Testament Church. We must neither ignore the diversities among the congregations of ancient Corinth and Antioch nor deny the unities which bind together congregations in Vancouver and Birmingham. Now, as then, "there are varieties of service but the same Lord." Yet unity is not conformity; diversity is not division. It is against frigid conformities and shrill divisions that we are summoned to struggle. The shape of this struggle and its true goals may be seen in the New Testament. In its pages we may glimpse the authentic unity and the equally authentic diversity which the living Lord gives to his people. The pages which follow are an attempt to turn this glimpse into words.

This book is ecumenical in its origins as well as in its motivation. Its materials have been used in addresses to Methodists in North Carolina, to Lutherans in Pennsylvania, to Congregationalists in Ohio, and to ministers of the United Church of Canada in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Nova Scotia. To responsive and critical listeners in all of these places I am indebted.

PAUL S. MINEAR

*Newton Centre, Massachusetts*

# ***Contents***

	PAGE
HOW TO USE THIS BOOK	9
AN AMERICAN PREFACE	11
Chapter 1. GOD'S PEOPLE	15
2. CALLED BY MY NAME	24
3. THE NEW AND LIVING WAY	34
4. MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS	44
5. GOD'S TEMPLE	54
6. ONE FLOCK, ONE SHEPHERD	63
7. ELECT EXILES OF THE DISPERSION	72
8. THE ONE NEW MAN	82
FOR FURTHER STUDY	92



## chapter I

# **God's People**

*in which it is shown that God's people is called into being only by his mercy, and has a task and a destiny different from that of any other people upon earth.*

ONE THING, and only one thing, do I as the author of this book know about you, the readers. I know the name, the common family name, which you bear. It is the name Christian. This is a name which is now known and used in every language and every country to indicate the followers of Jesus Christ. His name binds us together within a single community which spans the continents and the centuries.

None of us fully grasps the meaning of that one name which binds us together. We are Christians; but none of us can fully understand the wisdom and power of him who shares with us his name, Jesus Christ. We are members of his church; but none of us can satisfactorily describe the mysterious glory of that church. We belong to the people of God; but when we seek to find words which will match

the many-sided life of that people, we become mice trying to map the mountains.

Furthermore, we are all aware of divisions and conflicts among the people of God. We had hoped, on entering the church, to find ourselves drawn out of isolation into a healing fellowship. We longed for that peace which passes human understanding and triumphs over human hostilities. And to some degree, small or great, we have been granted this peace. By granting us his peace, however, God has given us also a share of his "controversy" with his people. He both judges us and makes us aware of his anguish over a broken, divided church. All the hostilities within God's people become more obvious and more wounding as Christians become more sensitive to the purposes and power of their one Lord.

These, then, are two facts which we, author and readers, will keep in mind. As God's people, we now know far too little of the length and breadth of what it means to be people of God. As servants of the one Lord we are troubled by the manifold divisions within his church, and we need to receive that power which is able to overcome our mutual hostilities. How can we meet this need unless we are willing to listen anew to God's Word, patiently and humbly, as he speaks to us in the New Testament?

How shall we conduct this study? I suggest that we look at some of the distinctive word-pictures which early Christians used to describe the church. We will look for various answers to two specific questions: What is the character and calling of that church of Christ to which we belong? How does the power of Christ, in his work among men, overcome their hostilities?

Our attention may well be drawn, first of all, to the picture which lies largely hidden behind the prosaic term "the people of God." Today the one word "church" does service almost everywhere as the technical, official desig-

nation for the Christian community. It is a greatly over-worked word. By contrast, the New Testament uses a variety of images and words. At no time in the New Testament period did any single term become accepted as the technical, official name for the Christian community. Probably the term "people of God" was the most widely used and commonly accepted. This phrase holds at least one advantage over the term "church." The latter title can be used by Christians and non-Christians alike, and often with the same meaning. This would not be true of the former, because outsiders would be unlikely to call Christians "the people of God."

Let us begin our study with this text from 1 Peter:

"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy" (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

1. "You are . . . God's own people." The "you" is plural. Many men and women are addressed in this one phrase. But "people" is singular. There is only one community which God recognizes as his own.

2. The men and women now saluted as God's people had not always been capable of receiving this greeting. "Once you were no people." That is a curious statement. Surely they had been a people, living together and inheriting the natural ties of race, of nation, of class—yes, even of religion. Yet they had *not* been a people in the same sense in which they have now become "God's people." They are still *a people* like other peoples; yet they have become *the people* in a sense found nowhere else.

3. Referring again to our text, we may note the parallel description: "once you had not received mercy but now

you have received mercy." To be "no people" means that they had not as yet received mercy. To be "God's people" means that they have now received mercy. In other words, God's people is constituted, is brought into being, is sustained from day to day, by that mercy which God gives and which men can receive.

4. How does this mercy create a new people? God delivers those who were no people "out of the darkness into his marvelous light." To be ignorant of this deliverance is to be ignorant of his mercy, and thus to remain "no people." Those, on the other hand, who have become people of God both remember this unmerciful darkness and rejoice in deliverance from it. To be God's people is to be children of his marvelous light.

5. What is God's purpose for this people who receive mercy and dwell in light? "That you may declare the wonderful deeds." Whose deeds? God's. He it is who through exercising mercy lays upon his people the mission of being merciful. To receive forgiveness is to become a witness to the God who forgives. To become a member of God's people is to be sent back again from light into darkness, carrying God's mercy to the "no people." God's mercy cannot be limited to his people, since they owe their very existence to *mercy*, a mercy always designed to shine "on those who sit in darkness."

Those who accept this mission can appreciate why the apostle, in speaking of "God's own people," should place so strong an accent on the possessive case. On what is God's possession based? On his ownership? Yes; his people belong to him in the same sense in which slaves belong to their master. But surely there is more involved than financial rights. God's people belongs to him in the same sense that sons belong to their father. His possession springs from the fact that he has created them out of nothing. He has delivered them from bondage. He has given them birth

as his children. He has purchased them by turning enemies into friends through the costly mercy of Christ's death.

But what is God's purpose in thus *creating* a people for his own *possession*? The apostle Paul discovers a profound answer in the Old Testament: "God said, 'I will live in them and move among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people'" (2 Cor. 6:16; cf. Exod. 25:8; 29:45; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 31:1; Ezek. 37:27).

Men and women become God's people through the fact of God's desire *to live in them*. He chooses not only to live in them but *to move among them*, actively accomplishing his purposes, powerfully working out through them his design for the world. His presence makes them his people, and at the same time establishes him in the position of being their God, their only God (cf. also Rev. 21:3).

From other prophecies Paul draws a picture, even more intimate and more ultimate, of the bond between God and his people: "I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters" (2 Cor. 6:18).

To be God's people is to be his children. This child-parent relationship carries with it the promise of unimaginable glories yet to come. But it is already a real relationship between the Father and his children. God claims us now as his own children. Because of this claim, and only because of it, can we claim him as our Father. And what a tremendous claim it is! The Almighty Lord of heaven and earth transforms ordinary frail creatures of dust into members of his family!

The New Testament writers make it very plain that this family bond is one of great intimacy. God's people, among whom he wills to dwell, have his laws written on their hearts. From the least to the greatest they know who he is. Through the experience of forgiveness—sins both forgiven

and forgotten—they have received the indelible imprint of the purpose of their God:

“This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. . . . I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts. . . . And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more” (Heb. 8:10–12).

The last sentence from this passage takes us back to that emphasis on the mercy of God which is noted in 1 Peter. From beginning to end, the story of God’s people is nothing more nor less than the story of his saving mercy.

What is the relation of God’s people to other peoples? In one sense, as we have said, there *are* no other peoples. Yet in another sense there are in the world many tribes and tongues and peoples and nations. God’s people differs from all others in this fact: in creating it, he calls men out of “every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues” (Rev. 7:9). This is to say that God’s community is destined to include men from every *type* of community, whether based on race or language or nationality or culture. Moreover, God’s people is destined to include men from *every* such community, from every race, from every nation. God’s people is, in fact, charged with preaching the eternal gospel to every human community.

God always goes ahead of his people in their mission of proclaiming this good news. Two episodes in the Book of Acts illustrate how he does this. One is the crucial occasion when Paul and Barnabas were forced to defend their missionary activities among the Gentiles before the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. First of all, Peter recalls to the company the story of his own work among the Gentiles:

“Brethren, you know that in the early days God made

choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:7-9).

It is fascinating to note the way James later tells the same story: "Symeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name" (Acts 15:14).

We can assume that James thought that he was simply repeating Peter's words. Was he? Yes; the same event could be described either as God *taking a people for his name*, or as Peter *preaching the gospel*, or as *the Holy Spirit being received* in penitent, believing hearts. James tells us *what* had happened. Peter tells us *how* it happened. Men preach the gospel, men believe—that is the outward circumstance; but God visits, God gives the Holy Spirit, God calls into being his people—that is the inner reality.

The second episode occurs in connection with the beginning of Paul's work in Corinth. He was facing both violent opposition from the Jewish synagogue and the prospect of official trial in the Roman law courts. A few converts had accepted the gospel, but there was ample reason why Paul should be tempted to despair. One night in a vision the Lord said to his ambassador: "Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no man shall attack you to harm you; for I have many people [literally "a numerous people"] in this city" (Acts 18:9-10).

The Lord possessed a people in that city even before Paul arrived, even before he had preached. The apostle was not creating a people—he was simply finding those men and women whom the Lord had already claimed as his own. The ambassador could never tell in advance which

of his hearers belonged to God's people. Nothing external about them—their color or age or wealth or power—could reveal God's secret choice. Only the hidden movement of God's Spirit among them could bring to light those individuals whom God had called in order that he might dwell within them.

Those, however, who in receiving mercy were accorded the mysterious assurance of their Father's love, received also the command to declare to others what marvelous things were being done. The beloved community is never complete as long as there are those who have not yet received mercy. Until the end, therefore, the people which the Lord creates must carry on the Lord's mission of claiming men from every race and language and nation. Its existence as God's people *now* is the guarantee that ultimately every knee shall bow and every tongue confess the one name that is above every other name.

There is no other people like this. Its uniqueness lies in its owner, its king, its ruler. Only he can say of it, "My people." Its uniqueness lies also in its origin—God's gracious calling expressed in the forgiveness of sins. Its uniqueness lies in its mission—to proclaim the eternal gospel to all nations and tribes and tongues and peoples. Its uniqueness lies in its destiny—to be fulfilled when the knowledge of God covers the earth as the waters cover the sea. This people may have a long record of treachery, but the record of God's goodness is yet longer. Having experienced what it means to sit in darkness, this people has seen a great light. For it, day has dawned, and the surest token of the day is the love of God incarnate in a suffering Messiah (Matt. 4:16).

Let us not forget this basic fact about the people of God—its origin in *his mercy*. Other human societies may be bound together by a common ancestry, a common language, a common territory, or a common set of earthly



loyalties. God's people, to be sure, finds itself subject to these same conditions; but what makes it utterly unique is the action of God's mercy in its creation, preservation, and extension.

When it lives by this mercy, a community discloses the power of its God through loving its enemies and praying for its persecutors. As long as God's people is faithful to this mercy, it is prevented from ever feeling superior to other communities. It can never be dominated by ambitions of prestige and earthly power, but only by gratitude and joy over God's presence. It can never be overcome by fear for its own fortunes, because both the future and the present, both life and death, have been redeemed by the power of God's love. The Holy Spirit which makes this people God's people is the Spirit of power, because it is the Spirit of forgiveness. Moved by this Spirit, early Christians gave their gratitude wings in a song that accompanied their prayers to the throne of God, a song that they addressed to Jesus the Messiah:

*Worthy art thou to take the scroll  
and to open its seals,  
for thou wast slain and by thy blood  
didst ransom men for God  
from every tribe and tongue  
and people and nation,  
and hast made them a kingdom  
and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on earth.*

(Revelation 5:9-10)

### **Passages for Further Study—God's People**

Matthew 1:18—2:6; Luke 1:5—79; Acts 3; Romans 9;  
Hebrews 8; 1 Peter 1:3—2:10; Revelation 5 and 21.

## chapter 2

### ***Called by My Name***

*in which it is shown that to be called by the Name demands of the people of God loyalty even unto death, but that God's power is present to protect and guard all who are called by that Name.*

**I**N ALL AGES Christian congregations have been called to worship "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." By invoking the presence of the Triune God, this call transforms an *audience* into a *congregation*, fusing the various individuals into a single worshiping unit. Something decisive happens to each person and to the community through the invocation of this name.

To invoke God's name is to recognize his presence in living glory and active power. He dwells where his name is. To speak in his name is to speak with words made powerful by his authority. To pray in his name is to pray with his Spirit. When his servants act in his name, it is he who is acting through their actions. It is in fact his purpose that

all his creatures should bear the name of their Creator, because he wills to be glorified in all.

For a congregation to invoke his name is to confess that of themselves they are nothing. Their own names—whether as individuals or as a human society—are insignificant in comparison with the name of their Lord. Their own power and prestige, their own authority and wisdom, their own history and destiny—all these are forgotten as they glorify the name of the One to whom alone they ascribe majesty, dominion, and power.

For each of us, of course, our own name has unique value. My own name becomes for me much more than a convenient tag that others can use. It is a living link with ancestors and descendants, yet it also identifies me as a separate individual. As the years come and go, it more fully represents my own ability, my honor, my authority—in short, my whole past and future. It reveals who I am both to enemies and friends. Yet my friends know my name better than my enemies do, because friends know my heart more fully. To them I am willing to reveal the meaning of my name more completely. To them, as to myself, the name stands for the total self, the actual person. For me, then, to invoke the name of God is impossible unless I know who he is, and unless I surrender my own name and make it subject to his. To do this is not easy for an individual.

It is no easier for a congregation. Sometimes it seems easier than it is, because we do not really know him whose name we so glibly pronounce; sometimes, because we substitute the less potent adjective “Christian” for the name of the living person Jesus Christ.

“Christian” as a label appears only three times in the New Testament. It was probably coined by enemies to identify those whom they were ridiculing or persecuting (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). Christ’s followers were

not unwilling to accept the designation, in spite of its unpopularity, because it gave an unintended witness to their Lord. But they preferred the personal name of Jesus the Christ, and they were more concerned to stress his name than their own. He had given them his own new name and, in doing this, had made of them a new community of new persons. He had called them *for* his name, and they had responded by calling *on* his name. They were one people, because *one* God had called them into being through his Son. They had replied by calling on the *one* name which is above every name. It was *into*, *through*, and *under* this name that they suffered and endured and hoped. In this name they fought and conquered. In brief, Christians were those who sought to “do everything *in the name* of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17).

This way of speaking may well make us uncomfortable about the titles which we apply to churches today. Each modern denomination bears an official title—the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Sweden, the Mar Thoma Church, the Methodist Church. Separate congregations also select their own titles with care—the Central Baptist Church, Christ Church, Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church. We do not question the need for such labels. We discover how deeply rooted they have become, whenever there is an effort to change the name, or when two congregations or two denominations are considering a merger. Almost always such a proposal reveals dislike of strange names and devotion to familiar ones.

In sharp contrast to our modern habit, the New Testament placed a primary emphasis on the personal name of the Lord of the church. Every congregation which invoked his name thereby made itself subject to his power and his authority to own and to order all those who were called by his name. The apostles had a good reason for not stressing

the names of separate congregations. Such names are divisive; Christ's name is unitive. All his servants bore the name of their common Lord. They were baptized into his name and not into a church with some other name. The most important thing about any congregation was the name *called over it*. And this congregation was united with all other congregations by the fact that the same name held ultimate sovereignty over them all.

The reconciling power of this name was displayed in the story of the first great council in the life of the church (Acts 15:1-35). Beginning among Jews at Jerusalem, the gospel of Christ had been proclaimed in Judea and Samaria, in Phoenicia and Syria and Cilicia. The Holy Spirit had opened the door of faith not only to Jews but also to Gentiles. But now Christian Jews contested the right of Gentiles to a place among God's people, unless they had first accepted the Jewish law. Would the dividing walls of race and culture prevail among Christians; or would the Christian gospel demonstrate a power adequate to destroy every such wall? The debate was joined openly in the assembly of apostles and elders in Jerusalem. The outcome depended on how the apostles and elders would answer the question: "What has God been doing?"

Had God initiated the mission? "Yes," said Peter. It is he who made the choice of apostles to preach to the Gentiles. It is he who, knowing Gentile hearts, gave them the Spirit and cleansed their hearts by faith. His grace has taken away the distinction between Jew and Gentile. To require something extra of Gentile Christians would be to reject what God himself has done. James agreed fully with Peter. What makes Gentiles members of the one people of God is precisely this: They are "called by my name" (vs. 17). This in brief was the argument which revealed to the apostles the unity which God intended both Jews and Gentiles to have within his one people.

What does it mean to be called by his name? Obviously, it means that they were called by a Person whose name represents his power and authority, his sovereign will and his independent choice. Through his name, the invisible God reveals his eternal will by his choice of a people. He gives them his own name, disclosing to them his mercy and sharing with them his very life. He is the One from whom and by whom every family in heaven and on earth is named (Eph. 3:15). But with one family alone has he thus far shared the knowledge of his name. This name alone has power to determine who are the descendants of Abraham (Rom. 9:6-8). Men can never steal from God his right to name his children. Only he "knows those who are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). To be called by God's name is nothing less than to be included in a community where there is enduring fellowship with God and with all who belong to him. Those who destroy the unity of God's people, either by external attack or by inner treason, are really blaspheming the name by which this people is called (Jas. 2:7). To reject men among whom God dwells is to dishonor his name (Rev. 13:6). All this is included in the meaning of the phrase "called by my name."

Another phrase tells why God's people are created. God calls a people "for his name" (Acts 15:14). Whatever God does in history is a proclamation of his name, a demonstration of his hidden power (Rom. 9:17). It is "*for the sake of his name among all the nations*" that Paul receives grace and apostleship (Rom. 1:5). Every Christian witness who carries his name must be ready to suffer *for this name* (Acts 9:15-29; 15:26; 21:13). A Christian can live faithfully in the face of trials only by holding fast his name, and by enduring every test *for the sake of thū name* (Rev. 2:3, 13). God's name thus becomes a way of expressing the highest goal of a Christian congregation: to

live and to die for the sake of his name. This name is powerful enough to cleanse and to heal, to justify and to sanctify, to kill and to make alive. It is much more than a verbal sound, whispered or shouted; it is the mysterious presence of God himself in all his power, glory, and grace.

In our exploration of the power of God's name, we have not separated the name of God the Father from the name of God the Son. Everywhere in the New Testament the two names are closely identified. God has given Jesus Christ his own name, a name which is above every name. In bowing at the name of Jesus, in confessing him as Lord, men declare that they have beheld *the glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ (Phil. 2:9-11). In the person and work of Jesus, God chose to reveal his own heart, his own gracious power, his own saving presence. Because God in Christ reconciles the world to himself, Christ's name and God's kingdom become forever inseparable (Acts 8:12). Those who believe on Jesus and call on his name share with Jesus in God's name and the name of God's Holy City (Rev. 3:12).

New Testament writers use various expressions to describe this unity of Father and sons in the one name. Perhaps no passage is more richly suggestive than the prayer of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John. On the night of his arrest Jesus prayed that his self-offering might be sanctified, and that his disciples also might be sanctified. He specifically included not only those who were with him in the Upper Room, but all who would come to believe on him through their mission. Let us underline three sentences in this most solemn of all prayers:

"I have *manifested thy name* to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world; thine they were, and thou gavest them to me, and they have kept thy word" (17:6).

Jesus had manifested God's name. How? By accomplishing God's commission, by glorifying God in all that he had done, by giving to men God's message, and by exercising God's power in sharing eternal life with them (vss. 2, 4, 8). To whom was this name displayed? To those whom God had chosen and had given to Jesus. In receiving God's name, they had received eternal life, the glory and knowledge of God, and the power to keep God's word. God's name is a two-way highway, along which God's glory comes down among men and along which the same glory ascends from men toward God.

"Holy Father, keep them *in thy name* which thou hast given me, that they may be one, even as we are one" (17:11).

God's name is Father! This name carries with it the promise and the power to protect men. God exercises the same concern for them, the same watchfulness, the same purposeful love, which Jesus has shown in his quest for the lost sheep. In fact, God has given his own name to Jesus, and has thus established their *oneness*. Jesus, on his side, had wholly yielded himself to the glory of God. He had wholly offered himself in his love for men. His power, authority, lowliness, love—all these marked the unbreakable unity of Father and Son in the one name. Even more amazing than this, the Son prays that this same oneness may be realized within that community which God has given to him. And who can deny that the Son's petition, offered in his Father's name, was granted? This may lead us to a profound understanding of the character of God's people. They are those whom God gives to Jesus, who are held secure in God's name, and who are made one by the very bond which makes the Father one with his Son.



*"I made known to them thy name, and I will make it known, that the love with which thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them" (17:26).*

Here, in the conclusion of this sublime prayer, Jesus indicates the forward and outward thrust of his mission. God's name is love. In manifesting God's love through his ministry and death, Jesus revealed that name. The work of making that name known will continue to the ends of the earth and until the end of time. Whenever God's love animates the ministry of Christ's people, there Christ himself is at work. The love of God incarnate in Christ and embodied in Christ's community—this love is the way God has chosen to make his name known to all men.

Where this love commands and draws forth obedience, there God's name is being hallowed. The people of God can do only one of two things—they may hallow his name, or they may blaspheme it. If they glorify it, their own names are written in the book of life; if they betray it, their names are blotted out of that book.

This was the choice forced upon Christians in the Roman province of Asia, when the officials of the state required all whose political loyalty was uncertain to confess publicly their allegiance to the emperor as Lord. This was something which the prophet John refused to do; hence his imprisonment on Patmos. From prison he passed on to the threatened churches an urgent message from their living Lord. Christ reassured those who were enduring patiently "for my name's sake" and promised them new names, names securely inscribed in the book of life. Those who conquered, even though they might be executed, would have written on their faces "the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God . . . and my own new name" (Rev. 2:3, 13, 17; 3:4, 5, 12; 14:1).

Should they lose heart, however, and deny their faith,

the opposite destiny would be theirs. A demonic power was making war on the saints with seemingly unlimited authority and uncontrolled violence. This power was full of blasphemous names, because it claimed the final, unreserved loyalty of men. By its attack upon God's people it was blaspheming the name and dwelling of God (those who dwell in heaven). All those who yielded loyalty—final, unquestioning loyalty—to this beast received, to the prophet's eye, the name of the beast on their forehead (Rev. 13:17; 14:11). All the complex issues of doubt and suffering were thus reduced to a single alternative: whose name is to be imprinted on our souls?

Men and women who "love not their own lives," but who lose themselves in love for Christ and his brethren—these men and women belong to the Holy City, to "the new Jerusalem which comes down from my God out of heaven." They are nourished by the tree of life. They need no light other than God's own presence. In making God's way known among men, they share in God's conquering power. All this, and more too, is what it means to have God's name written on their foreheads (Rev. 22:1-5). No enmity can survive within the Holy City, because all who dwell therein give all honor, glory, and power to the only name which can accomplish the "healing of the nations."

Citizenship in this City carries with it fullness of life for every person, for here there are at the same time many names and one name. Each member has his own name written in the book of life (Phil. 4:3). The Great Shepherd calls each sheep by its own name (John 10:3). God numbers even the hairs on every disciple's head, so careful is he not to destroy his identity. But this true being of each self can be brought to perfection only because each is bound to all others in the unity of the one name. By glorifying together the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all voices become one voice, all tongues one

tongue, all works of love one work of love, and all peoples one people.

**Passages for Further Study—The Name**

Deuteronomy 16:1–12; Matthew 18:10–22; 28:1–20; Luke 9:46–10:22; John 14:12–16:28; Acts 9, 10; 1 Corinthians 1; Philippians 1:27–2:13; James 2:1–13; Revelation 2, 3, 13, and 14.

## chapter 3

# ***The New and Living Way***

*in which we ask why a community of people is called "the road," and why Jesus himself is spoken of as "the living road."*

**T**HE WORDS used in the Bible to describe the Christian community are among those which in any language are the commonest, the most ordinary, and the most concrete. We cannot talk for long in any language without using the words "people" and "name." Nor can we avoid using some term for "way," "path," "road," or "street." Just as every human being bears a name and belongs to a people, so does he live by, and walk along, some street or road. From time to time he must choose one path rather than another. "To be at the crossroads" is in most languages a common expression for being in the situation of having to make a choice. "Which way shall I take?" is a universal question, at once simple and final. The earliest Christian company called themselves "the Road" or "the Way." Why was this so? Let us begin our study with the

Acts of the Apostles, in which this picture comes out more clearly than in the other New Testament books.

In Acts, chapter 24, we overhear the proceedings in a Roman courtroom. Spokesmen of the Jews are presenting a legal case against Paul before the governor Felix. What in brief was their charge?

"We have found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. He even tried to profane the temple" (24:5-6).

This is a carefully worded charge, which places both Paul's life and his work in jeopardy. How does Paul answer it? He both admits and denies various accusations. He admits that he had come to worship in the temple, but denies any intention to profane the temple. He admits his leadership of the Nazarenes, but denies that this is a crime against his people: "I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers" (24:14).

Outsiders quite naturally spoke of the Christian fellowship as simply another sect, one among many. Believers spoke of it neither as one of the Jewish sects, nor as a religion separate from Israel, but very simply as "*the Way*."

Paul in his defense indicates the links which bound the Way to Israel. As a member of the Way, he worshiped Israel's God. He believed in the law and the prophets, the sacred Scriptures of Israel. He had a hope which rested in God and in his covenant promise to Israel—"that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust." He had demonstrated his love for Israel by bringing a large gift from his Gentile associates to meet the famine conditions at Jerusalem.

Yet Paul puts his finger on the real difference between the synagogue and the Way. He had been placed on trial

because of "the resurrection of the dead" (vs. 21). Members of the Way and Jews of the synagogue alike believed in resurrection; but those of the Way knew that the resurrection had already taken place in the exaltation of Jesus as Lord. Those who belonged to the Way were already participants in the power and glory of eternal life. Those Jews who did not accept this resurrection as a fact could view the Christian community only as a dangerous and a deluded sect within the synagogue. Those, on the other hand, to whom the Risen Christ was living Lord knew themselves to be already sharers in the life of Christ's kingdom and messengers of the new age.

As he defended his cause before his antagonists, Paul was hoping that what had happened to him on the road to Damascus might happen to them also. For he, too, had been a persecutor of Christians, resenting bitterly their claims. Paul had planned the Damascus trip in order to search the synagogue for men and women "who belong to the Way" (Acts 9:2; 22:4). These disciples belong so completely to the Lord that when the Lord himself halts Paul with a question, "Why do you persecute me?" and when Paul counters with another question, "Who are you?" the Lord answers, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." In other words, Christ identified himself with the Way which Paul was attacking. This Lord knew how to protect his people in Damascus. He also knew how to bring to his knees this most bitter enemy (9:4-5; 22:7-8). He reconciled this enemy and called him into "the Way."

The steps involved in the transition are hinted at by the narrator. Made aware of his blindness, Paul was enabled to see. He came to realize that God had chosen him to "know his will, to see the Just One and to hear a voice from his mouth" (22:14). He learned to call on the name of Jesus. He was baptized. His sins were washed

away. He was commanded to become a witness to Jesus, giving his testimony to his former comrades. This testimony included his confession of guilt for having on his own hands the blood of Christ's witnesses. Thus Paul became one of those who belonged to Christ's Way. Christ intended him "to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel" and to "suffer for the sake of my name" (9:15-16). To belong to the Way meant to share in the suffering and the mission of Christ himself.

Why should "*the Way*" have become a title for the Christian people? Perhaps because John the Baptist, in line with Isaiah's vision, had considered it his vocation to "prepare the way of the Lord" (Matt. 3:3), and Jesus had come to complete the building of this highway. Perhaps we should see in the title the strong recollection of Christians that Jesus had demanded that every disciple must prefer the narrow gate to the wide, the hard road to the easy (Matt. 7:13-14). He had himself identified *life* with passing through the narrow *gate* into the hard *road*. Did the name become attached to Christians because both Jesus and his apostles used so frequently such phrases as "the way of righteousness" (Matt. 21:32), "the way of peace" (Luke 1:79; Rom. 3:17), "the ways of life" (Acts 2:28), "the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17), "the way of God" (Matt. 22:16; Acts 18:26)?

Of some of these things we cannot be certain, but four conclusions are quite sure: (1) "The Way" was widely assumed to be an appropriate description of the Christian community. (2) It was normally spoken of in the singular—there is only one true Way, not many. (3) The preposition "of" was used more frequently than the preposition "to." It is not so much the road by which one moves *toward* a goal, more or less distant; it is rather the road *on* which and *along* which travelers in a single company receive peace, righteousness, salvation, and life. (4) The

Way is thus quite inseparable from Jesus Christ, who is persecuted when his disciples are persecuted, whose death and life provide the pattern of discipleship, and whose very flesh and blood provide immediate access into the sanctuary of God's temple, a Way which is both new and living (Heb. 10:20).

It is in the Gospel of John that this fourth conclusion is most plainly set forth; here Jesus Christ himself declares with great simplicity and power, "I *am* the way." John 13:33 makes clear that the central problem is to be found in the phrase, thrice repeated, "where I am going." This was a phrase which baffled the disciples and their spokesmen Peter, Thomas, and Philip.

To understand their confusion, the reader should imagine himself in a strange part of the country. Suppose you have lost your way. You meet a pedestrian in a small town. You hail him and ask, "Can you help me find my way?" He will no doubt first ask, "Where are you going?" Now suppose you answer, "I don't know where I'm going. I simply want to find the way." What will he say? Would you be surprised if he thought you crazy, or suspected you of playing a trick on him? Everyone realizes that a person must know where he wants to go before he selects a route.

This is, I believe, the problem that confronts us in thinking of the Way. Like the disciples, all of us assume that, before we choose a road, we must be sure that it is the road that will take us where we want to go. Jesus, in effect, tells us that if we know the right road to choose, we do not need to know its end. If the disciples *really* know Jesus, they will know both whence he comes and whither he is going. Only by accepting his Way will they learn where they too are to go. He is the Way, his own and theirs.



But let us follow through the dialogue, to see just how Jesus tries to correct their confusion (and ours).

1. Knowing that he will soon be separated from his disciples, Jesus says, "You will seek me; . . . Where I am going you cannot come" (vs. 33). Why can they not follow him? Is he going to hide himself? To leave the country? The answer is given indirectly. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you." At first sight this remark seems entirely out of place. Yet it points to the real reason for their failure to understand. They cannot go where he is going, because they do not yet love others as he has loved them. They cannot know where he is going until they share his love, his total self-giving. Not sharing his love, they cannot share his truth or his life—yet. *Apart from obeying the commandment to love, a person is unable to learn the truth about either the Way or the Life.*

2. The disciples could not understand this. So Peter bluntly asks, "Lord, where are you going?" (vs. 36). But what help does Jesus give? "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward." Peter protests, "Lord, why cannot I follow you now?" Peter thought he knew what it meant to follow Jesus: "I will lay down my life for you." Is this not satisfactory evidence of loyalty? Jesus was not satisfied. He knew that Peter would deny him before the very next dawn. Peter was not able to follow, because he was not aware of his own weakness. He did not yet see that taking Jesus' way required of a person a total self-forgetting love, a love directed not only toward Jesus but toward others (vs. 34). Proof that Peter was not yet on the road with Jesus is furnished by his later threefold denial at Jesus' trial (chap. 18).

Although Jesus knew that Peter was not yet walking

the same road, he nevertheless gave to him this promise: "You shall follow afterward." This was a divine promise, a prayer of the Lord which would surely be fulfilled. Even Peter's treachery would be overcome by Christ's love for his sheep. Even denial of Christ would be a means of discipline, a God-used method for ultimate victory. Christ's promise proved to be stronger than either the world's deceits or the disciple's despair. The disciple did, in fact, "follow afterward." And this following was accomplished not so much at the moment of Peter's death as a martyr, but at the Sea of Galilee where the fisherman breaks bread with his Risen Master, and where he accepts his vocation to feed the sheep. The power of the Risen Lord was able to translate Peter's threefold denial (chap. 18) into a threefold pledge of love (chap. 21). The same Lord re-directed this pledge of love into a threefold command to feed his sheep. *It was only by feeding the sheep that Peter would walk the Way which the Good Shepherd is.*

3. After Jesus' interchange with Peter comes a similar conversation with Thomas. Jesus had said, "You know the way where I am going" (14:4). Thomas protested, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?" Like us all, Thomas wanted to know the end of the road first. It is in response to this protest that we overhear the Lord replying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." In other words: If you know the way, you know the end. And if you know me, you know the way. If you know me, you already know the Father. The end of the road is this: "to come to the Father"; but this is the beginning of the road as well. Those who take this road will inherit life at the end; but this life is real all along the road, for the Way is the Life.

Did Thomas understand where Jesus was going? No, no more than Peter. His very question betrayed his blindness. And, just as Jesus later showed the Way to Peter

by commanding him to feed the sheep, so too did Jesus later show the Way to Thomas. Thomas' doubts in the Upper Room (John 20:24f.)—his skepticism concerning the Life—were but the other side of his doubt concerning the Way. Yet something decisive happened when he discerned in the Risen Lord the marks of suffering in hands and feet. *These marks proved that the Way of the Cross had been the very Life of God.* For the first time Thomas recognizes who Jesus really is; now he knows him, finds in him the truth, and follows him. He now understands how and why the Life is the Way, how and why Jesus' Way had been the way in which God's purpose had been both revealed and fulfilled.

4. This is also the gist of the answer Jesus gave to Philip. Philip had broken in with a sharp demand: "Show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied" (14:8). He rebuked Philip with the sharpest of gentle questions, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father." Belief in Christ as Son means acceptance of his way of suffering as the road God takes in *coming down to men* with his gifts of light and glory and life. The same way is man's road in *returning to God's house* with life's load of thanksgiving and love. On this Way, heavenly glory is realized most fully in earthly crucifixion. On this Way, eternal life is present here and now in earthly love.

Because of this Way, all the *highways* of the earth are opened to disciples, and all their travels become missionary journeys. The world which God loved so much becomes their parish. The rude and painful cross becomes the glorious sign by which they conquer. The feeding of the sheep becomes the form by which they express their vocation. For God's Son has brought life *from heaven to earth*. In him, God's truth became incarnate and dwells

among us, full of grace and truth for us. This is the reason why the Way becomes hope *for* the world, hope *for* history, hope *for* all the men whom God loves and will draw to himself in the Crucified. *Salvation, then, does not mean a flight to the skies. This road is a reality of common life on the earth.* It is as pilgrims here that disciples see the Son, know the Father, and receive the Holy Spirit. Those who are walking in the Way talk not so much of our own departure for heaven, but of Christ's visit to us, his dwelling among us, and his body broken for us. Through him, God's will *is* done on earth as it is in heaven.

With this picture of the Way on the front wall of his mind, the Bible student should read again the Gospel of Mark or the Gospel of Luke. He will perhaps notice for the first time how many of the scenes in this drama take place on a road or by its side. How frequently Jesus meets men on the road. It is on the road that he asks men decisive questions: "Who do you say I am?" It is on the road that he heals the lepers, calls Zacchaeus, and meets the query of the rich young ruler. The road leading to Jerusalem is of especial importance to Luke. It is along this road that Jesus teaches the mysteries of a kingdom which redeems through suffering. The way to Emmaus is also highly significant. There Jesus appears to two disciples, talks with them, opens to them the Scriptures while their hearts burn. In Acts, it was along a desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza that Philip interpreted Isaiah to the Ethiopian and baptized him.

From the time when Jesus first summoned men to repent until today, the Way is narrow enough to exclude all selfish and temporal hopes. ("Whoever does not renounce everything he has cannot be my disciple.") But this Way is broad enough to include all whom God loves in Christ. ("Whoever wills may come.") The narrowness destroys

self-centered hopes; the breadth creates universal community.

**Passages for Further Study—The Way**

Isaiah 40; Matthew 7; Mark 8:27—10:52; Luke 24; John 13, 14; Acts 9, 18, 24; Hebrews 9, 10; 2 Peter 2.

## chapter 4

# ***My Mother and My Brothers***

*in which it is shown how men are called out of their own families into the great family of God; and are then sent back to transform human families, and to make each Christian fellowship a living part of God's family.*

**F**OR THE VAST MAJORITY of us, no circle of associations is more intimate or more enduring than that which binds us to our family. Even before his birth, the web of a man's life receives a pattern which belongs to him forever. He is born as a child to particular parents, as a brother or sister of their other children. At birth he is their heir—heir of blood and lineage, of color and class, of wealth and prestige, or of poverty and sorrow.

Over the years of childhood and adolescence, the life in each household becomes a unique experience. As each member of the household develops, he becomes more independent as an individual, and yet more dependent, more fully part of the family life by which he is being formed. "For better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death us do part"—this wed-

ding vow is actually binding not on husband and wife alone, but on parents and children, and on brothers and sisters. They eat their meals in covenant together about the same table. Day after day they share the same tasks and the same gifts, the same frustrations and the same joys. The home may be the scene of great treacheries and great loyalties, although these may not become evident to others, just because, whatever happens beneath the surface, family life must somehow go on. Every home has its own crises—births and battles, sicknesses and celebrations, tragedies and deaths—and each crisis tests, and perhaps toughens, the fabric of a common faithfulness.

In most nations and religions the mutual obligations of parents and children take clear priority over all other obligations—not even the state can ignore or cancel the duties of son to father or of brother to brother. The terrors of political dictatorship are nowhere more frightful than in its power to destroy the cohesion of family life. On the other hand, the weakness of such dictatorships is demonstrated by the power of some families to maintain their mutual loyalties in the face of the most severe attacks.

From one standpoint, the coming of Jesus Christ gave new strength and permanence to the ordinary ties of kinship. Christ transformed the most ordinary human relationships by placing the highest possible value upon every person in the home, that person whose very nearness tempts parents or brothers to treat him with less than that respect which every person deserves. How often we treat our kinsmen with less courtesy than we give to outsiders! How often in the household is to be found the callous brutality of sharp words or the unintended cruelty of indifference! Among Christians these things ought not to be so; and therefore the earliest Christian catechisms stressed the elementary duties of the home as a part of Christian obedi-

ence: "Husbands, live considerately with your wives. . . . Wives, be submissive to your husbands. . . . Children, obey your parents. . . . Fathers, do not provoke your children."

It is well to recognize this insistence on family duties. Otherwise we shall fail to recognize how ruthless were the demands made by Christ upon men to consider other duties as even more binding than those of the family. Only in the light of the exalted status accorded by Jesus to the human family can we see clearly how much more exalted is the status of the family of God. For the purpose and result of Jesus' work was not directly the strengthening of the old family but the substitution for it of a new household: "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother" (Matt. 10:34-35).

The Lord did not hesitate to establish duties which claimed a priority much higher than the highest human associations: "If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26; Matt. 10:37).

To many people, even to many Christians, this demand has seemed excessive and repugnant. For many members of the church it has become a dead command. None of us finds it easy either to accept or to obey. Yet it is an inescapable part of the gospel.

Jesus assumed that the sacrifice of family loyalties was a very costly sacrifice. It is only in the light of this assumption that we can understand the meaning of his command. No disciple is taught to hate his parents in order better to love himself! On the contrary, a man's life in the family is a most intimate part of his own life, and thus the hatred of parents is the most extreme form of hating "even his own life." To be called to renounce his family is a test of his



readiness to renounce "all that he has" in order to become Christ's disciple (Luke 14:33). Only if discipleship to him represents the highest good can it be seen as reasonable that men should be commanded for his sake to hate even their families and themselves.

But, again, the command could not be made to seem reasonable unless in choosing to follow Christ a person inherits another family whose ties are rightly and truly stronger than those of his natural family. This is, in fact, exactly what is implied in the call of Jesus. In accepting that call, each disciple becomes at once and automatically a member of a new family. He receives new brothers for old. With the demand to hate one's father and mother are associated two declarations which are equally essential to the gospel.

The first is connected with a struggle in Jesus' own life, for he too was called upon to renounce the claims of his nearest (and dearest) of kin. His ministry had involved him in tense and dangerous controversy. One day his mother and brothers came to him, presumably urging him to give up his ministry and to return home. He met their request with a shocking question and an amazing answer: "Who are my mother and my brothers? Here [looking around] are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Mark 3:33-35).

A second episode indicates how Jesus applied the same principle to his followers (Mark 10:17-31). A young man, seeking eternal life, had asked Jesus what conditions he would be required to fulfill. Jesus had placed those requirements too high for this young man to accept. Even the disciples had been offended by Jesus' harshness. To be saved is "with men" impossible. When Peter reminded the Lord how much they had given up in order to follow him, Jesus replied:

“There is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions” (Mark 10:29–30).

Here in miniature is a picture of the Christian Church. Whoever belongs to Jesus belongs also to hundreds of brothers and mothers and children. No one can sacrifice all for his sake without receiving all. Every person in this household is my brother or mother or child, mine because he is first of all Jesus’ brother or mother or child.

Is it surprising that the first Christians quickly selected “brother” as a favorite greeting for one another? Or that “brethren” became a universally recognized way of saluting a Christian congregation? In the Book of Acts this term is used more than fifty times to designate fellow Christians. In Paul’s letters it is used more than a hundred times. The apostle found it entirely natural to have several mothers, many sisters, and even more brothers.

These family terms have been so endlessly repeated parrot-fashion over the centuries that in every modern language their rich meaning has been greatly reduced. “Brother” can be said so casually and glibly as to mean nothing at all. Generally speaking, the more frequently the word is used, the less weight it carries. In every country we are now familiar with “brotherhoods”—voluntary associations where the ties between men are as weak as the word itself has become.

To early Christians, however, this word opened a world of wonder and joy. It pictured a fellowship stronger than the strongest “natural” relationships. It had the power to draw men out of every kind of isolation into fellowship; and at the same time to penetrate the closest organizations of society, the family, the clan, the caste—and to replace

them by a different kind of community. "Brother" was a God-given word, the corollary of God's word "You are my son." The church was the true brotherhood. Churchmanship was nothing else than brotherliness.

Now, to be sure, if we have too many brothers, we are likely to find it difficult to maintain a true brotherly relationship with them all. A family that is too large ceases to be a family. But that is not true in the household of God. For here the *widening* of the circle is the result first of all of a *deepening* of the relationship. Where brotherhood is due simply to birth and race, to the fact of living close together, or to sharing the same civilization and way of living, then each brother becomes less important as the circle widens. But membership in Christ's family works according to the opposite logic: the discovery of one brother in Christ is itself the discovery of all brothers in him. To be "in Christ" is to experience a relationship far deeper than any mere human intimacy. How can this be?

For one thing, Christ's household is united by blood, by his own blood. I am united as a brother to everyone for whom he died (Rom. 14:15; 1 Cor. 8:11). His death binds us together. Each must treat the other as one whom Jesus has bought with his blood. Our treatment of one another is our treatment of Christ.

For another thing, Christ's death is a reality in which all members of his family participate. His cross is a burden which they share, each taking up the same cross daily. His body is one in which each member shares the suffering of the other members. Early martyrs were enabled to overcome the devils of fear and bitterness and cowardice because they knew that "the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world" (1 Pet. 5:9).

Often the ties of brother were demonstrated in less dramatic ways. "If a *brother* or *sister* is ill-clad and in lack of

daily food," he claims the help of every brother or sister. If the brother who has this world's goods, ignoring these immediate needs, turns the other away with the smoothest of pious words, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," he simply shows that his faith is dead and that he himself is dead—as a brother (Jas. 2:14–17).

Similarly, if a Christian flatters and tries to please the rich but treats the poor with contempt, he blasphemes the name of God the Father. For the Father has made all his sons equal as heirs of his kingdom. Members who introduce inequalities into his family are destroying God's work (Jas. 2:1–7).

Jesus Christ laid it down that the life of his brotherhood was to be love. To refuse to love one's brother is to remain in death. We have exchanged death for life only when God's love, dwelling in our hearts, is channeled through us into our brothers' lives. He has made it forever impossible to believe in Jesus Christ without loving our brothers (1 John 3:14–24). He has made it impossible either to fix a limit outside which this love need no longer be exercised, or to escape the immediate claim of every brother.

The household of God is thus not only more inclusive than the old household, but it is also more deeply based and enduring. The claims of his family, more than those of the old family, at the same time make us servants and make us free. The relationships between Christ and his brothers are invisible and mysterious, yet they find expression in very simple joys and duties. His demand to love him more than father or mother is as clear as it is sharp. But equally clear is the demand that those who thus love him should fulfill their obligations within the home. Because we have brothers a hundredfold, we can rightly love those who are our brothers by birth. Christ's own concern for his family, the church, becomes the perfect basis and

pattern for the conduct of husbands and wives, parents and children (Eph. 5:21-33). The natural love of a husband for his wife may be one of the things that keeps him back from following Jesus. But to love her "in the Lord" is a radically different thing, and is simply part of his following Jesus. By being drawn within God's larger household, each tiny household becomes a vastly different place.

All this was made possible by the fact that the Son of God identified himself fully with those whom he has called his brothers and sisters and mother. He was not ashamed to claim every man, however insignificant, as his brother. He was supremely concerned to deliver every man from his lifelong bondage by taking upon himself the form of a servant. He took upon himself our weakness, our temptations, our fears, our dying. And none of us can destroy that oneness with the Son of God into which he himself has welded us (Heb. 2:10-18).

When we speak of Jesus doing this and that, we must not think of all this simply as the advice and example of a Galilean teacher. In him we may see revealed the design of a merciful God whose purpose it is that all men should become his sons, as Jesus is his Son (Heb. 2:11). In Jesus was revealed the true image of sonship. All whom God calls he predestines "to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29). God's household derives its unique unity and its distinctive character from this simple truth: all who are called into it become sons of God, brothers and fellow heirs with the Son (Rom. 8:17). All who are born again of the Spirit, all who are led by the Spirit, are sons of God. They are born again as babes, infants who inherit at birth many brothers, who become at birth members in a new household. Of each of us God says what the father of the prodigal said of the returning spendthrift: "This my son was dead, and is alive again." To each of us

in the household God says what the same father said to the elder brother: "All that is mine is yours. . . . This your brother was dead, and is alive" (Luke 15:11-32).

Sonship, of course, requires and produces a certain family likeness between parent and child. God can be trusted to do his part. But this likeness cannot become a reality in the family of God unless we also are prepared to do our part. According to Jesus, being a brother was conditional upon *obeying the will* of a common Father (Mark 3:35). According to Paul, there is no true sonship apart from *faith* (Gal. 3:26). Those are fellow heirs with Christ who *suffer* with him (Rom. 8:17). According to the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is the work of the Father to *discipline* his sons, and it is the work of sons to take seriously and to endure bravely such chastisement (12:5-11). According to the prophet John, each son gains his heritage only by *conquering* (Rev. 21:7). In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphatically lays it down that since the Father does good to the evil and is kind to the ungrateful, men can prove themselves to be his sons only by *loving their enemies* and by praying for their persecutors (Matt. 5:44-45; Luke 6:35). Because God is peacemaker, *peacemakers* are blessed by being called his sons (Matt. 5:9).

The new brotherhood in Christ supersedes all former divisions among men: slave or free, Jew or Gentile, male or female. A vivid illustration of this transformation may be found in the case of Philemon the owner and Onesimus his slave. Onesimus had proved worthless as a slave because he had run away from his owner, perhaps taking with him some of the property of his lord. But Onesimus had become a child of the apostle, welcomed into the community of saints. He had become "the very heart" of Paul, valued and useful. Paul persuaded the runaway to return to his master. With him he sent a short note, addressed to the church in Philemon's house. Now Paul knew Philemon

both as a cheated master and as a beloved fellow worker. He trusts, therefore, that the common bond in Christ will be stronger than the antagonism of the master toward his slave:

“Perhaps this is why he was parted from you for a while, that you might have him back for ever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave, as a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord” (Philem. 15, 16).

That the apostle could expect Philemon to respond to this appeal is an index of his faith in the power of the Lord to make servants of human lords, in the mercy of the Father which produces mercy in his sons, in the brotherhood of Christ which turns all slaves and masters into brothers.

These brief studies raise some basic questions. Is the world-wide Church the family of God? Does a stranger who enters one of our churches at once find himself enriched by having many mothers and brothers and sisters? Do Christian families live their lives “in the Lord,” or do they live them just like other families in which the Lord is not a member? If we ask these questions seriously, we shall see both how tremendous are the demands that Christ makes on us, and also how wonderful are the possibilities that he opens out to those who are obedient.

### **Passages for Further Study—My Mother and My Brothers**

Matthew 5; Luke 14, 15; John 8:31–59; 20:11–18; Romans 4, 8; Galatians 3, 4; 1 Thessalonians 5; Hebrews 12; 1 John 3 and 4.

## chapter 5

### **God's Temple**

*in which it is shown that the people of God is a living Temple, with a new priesthood and a new sacrifice, new feasts and a new worship, and a new and living hope.*

**F**ROM THE first generation until now, the very failures of a Christian congregation to be Christ's family have from time to time drawn attention to the very truth of that vocation which it has in practice denied. The congregation in Corinth is an example. This city had been notorious for its quarrelsomeness. Even here, of course, the crucified Christ had been powerful enough to transform enemies into brothers. Yet the brothers brought into their new family many unconverted jealousies. Sharp animosities destroyed the family ties almost before they could be formed, and the apostle was forced to wage battle with factions and cliques. "Do you not know," he protested, "that you are God's temple" (1 Cor. 3:16)?

In Corinth there were many temples. In fact, few cities in any country have been without at least one temple. Human societies seem unable to endure long without them.



But no other temple is quite like the one of which Paul speaks. Note, for example, that he speaks not of a building but of men and women: "*you* are God's temple." This temple has a unique foundation: Jesus Christ himself. Because this one Person provides the only foundation, there can be but *one* temple, which includes all those whose lives are grounded in his. In such a temple there cannot be separate factions (1:13; 3:11).

It is indeed hard for us to break the habit of thinking of temples as buildings—cathedrals with lofty arches and soaring spires, or little village churches with wood or bamboo walls. But nowhere in the New Testament is this habit encouraged. What makes a place a temple is the dwelling there of the Holy Spirit (3:16), and God's Spirit dwells not in holy places but in persons (Acts 17:24).

His temple is constructed not with lifeless stones but with the lives of men. As 1 Peter teaches, Christ is a *living* cornerstone, and each person (or congregation) becomes a *living* stone, being *built into a spiritual* edifice where all the sacrifices offered are *spiritual* sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:4–8). The word "temple," as used by the apostles, pointed to a community of men, not to the building where these men worshiped. A person destroys God's temple not by acts which injure or harm a building, but by jealousies which divide the community.

In Jewish tradition a distinction was usually made between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, between the outer court and the inner, between the magnificent and stately cluster of buildings on Mount Zion, and that hidden sanctuary where God was present to meet with his people. The writers of the New Testament carefully observed this distinction, never applying the word that the Greeks had used for "temple" (*hieron*) to the church, probably because that word implied a specific geographical location, visible buildings, and walls made by hands. They believed that

something greater than "temple" in this sense had come into being among them and within them (Matt. 12:6). But they often used the other word for "temple" (*naos*), because the essential meaning of this term was *God's presence with his people*. Wherever God lives and moves, there is his temple. He does not choose to dwell at a specially sacred *place*, but among a living *family*, a fellowship created and sustained by his Spirit.

Frequently the early Christians used yet another word to describe the living presence of God among men—the word "tent" or "tabernacle" (*skene*). This had been Israel's place of worship long before any buildings had been constructed on Mount Zion. The tent had been the movable shrine, carried by the Israelites during the exodus from Egypt, the sign that God accompanied his people wherever they journeyed. God is to be found not only in the promised land at the end of the journey; whenever pilgrims on their journey worship him in spirit and in truth, they find that they are entering into the very presence of God. The promise that in a coming time God will "tabernacle" with his people is a supreme symbol of hope. The announcement that in Jesus Christ, God's Word actually "became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us" (John 1:14) makes it impossible for any journey now to mean exile from the presence of God. Whenever a Christian community becomes aware that God is dwelling in their midst, there God has pitched his tent. There is the temple.

But the Christian community is not only God's temple, even as understood in this radically new way. It is also a priesthood. Taken together as a unity, Christians form a kingdom of priests, a royal priesthood (Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6; 1 Pet. 2:9). As individuals, each one is not only a living stone in a spiritual building but also a priest offering a spiritual sacrifice. The Christ who serves as cornerstone serves also as high priest. In their attitudes toward

this priesthood, New Testament writers often surprise us.

For example, "priest" is not used in the New Testament, as it is often used today, to describe a separate order within the Christian ministry. The term as applied explicitly to Christians appears only in three writings. In 1 Peter and Revelation it describes *all* Christians as a single priesthood. In Hebrews it appears to be limited to Jesus Christ as high priest, although the work of the priests of Israel provides the basic pattern of comparison and contrast (e.g., chap. 9).

Why should every Christian be considered a priest? Why should the whole community be reckoned as a single priesthood? Why should Jesus Christ, the Galilean carpenter, be exalted to the role of high priest? The religious traditions and habits of Israel, of course, in part provide the answer. But the meaning of the old terms has been radically transformed to meet the new situation that had been created by Jesus Christ. To understand the new meaning of priesthood, we must first grasp the new Christian idea of sacrifice. And, for this, we must recall the basic outlines of the gospel.

Jesus Christ became the new high priest by virtue of the sacrifice he offered to God. And what was this sacrifice? Himself. Slain as the Lamb of God, he became our Pass-over sacrifice (1 Cor. 5:7). Loving us in our sins, he "gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Eph. 5:2).

During the days of his flesh, Jesus had taught that God does not desire burnt offerings for sin but desires mercy (Matt. 9:13; 12:7; Heb. 10:6, 8). He had shown that, in God's eyes, the love of neighbor is greater than all burnt offerings. He had therefore made of the days of his flesh a time for offering the sacrifice of himself. He had made of his own body the place of sacrifice, the altar. His vocation was simply to do God's will, offering to God his own

perfect obedience. By this obedience he abolished the legal order of burnt offerings, carried out by the companies of priests in the buildings on Mount Zion, and he established a new order of sacrifice according to God's will. "Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God." In this new order "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:1-10). Instead of relying on the repeated daily sacrifice of animals for the removal of our sins, Christians rely on this new covenant of forgiveness, won for us by that which animals could never offer, the perfect obedience of a human will. Everyone who believes, i.e., who has confidence in the perfection of this sacrifice, has access through the curtain which sets the Holy of Holies apart from the outer courts of the temple. He can enter the sanctuary of God's own presence, and receive there a perfect cleansing and renewal (Heb. 10: 19-22).

This High Priest enlists his followers into this new priesthood. Like high priest, like priest. By his example as our high priest, Christ forever determines the nature of the sacrifice that the church as a priesthood is called to offer.

For instance, Paul describes what is the reasonable spiritual worship to be offered by the brothers of Christ: "to present *your bodies* as a living sacrifice" (Rom. 12:1-2). Such an offering involves a breaking away from conformity to the world's mind and a radical renewal of one's own mind. The transformed mind views everything according to the measure of faith. Because all brothers are now seen as members of one body, faith understands the "living sacrifice" in terms of serving others. Such simple things as acts of mercy and hospitality, humility and hope, joy and sympathy—such things are evidence of the transformed mind (Rom. 12:3-21), and are parts and aspects of the Christian sacrifice. Mercy and love *are* greater than all burnt offerings. The command to be reconciled to one's

brother holds priority over the rituals of the altar (Matt. 5:23-24). God never relaxes his demand for a broken and contrite heart.

There were, of course, various distinctions in gifts within this royal priesthood. Some were apostles, some were teachers, some were prophets, and so forth. But the basic principle of sacrifice was the same for all. Each must present his body, his work, his total being, as a living sacrifice. The apostle performed a priestly service by so preaching the gospel that his converts might become *an acceptable offering* (Rom. 15:16). When they, in turn, offered themselves as a living sacrifice, the apostle added his own labors as a libation, a drink offering, *on their sacrifice* (Phil. 2:17). From time to time the converts supported the apostles' work with gifts of food and money. These simple gifts were accepted gratefully *as a fragrant sacrifice* to God (Phil. 4:18). One reason why such timely gifts were viewed as sacrifices is this: they overflowed "in many thanksgivings to God" (2 Cor. 9:12). Thus the corporate life of the Christian fellowship, engaged in its priestly sacrifice for others, could be spoken of as "the aroma of Christ to God" (2 Cor. 2:15). There is ultimately only one aroma because there is only one sacrifice, the sacrifice of joyful love, the sacrifice of the Son in which all other sons participate.

This is the significance, in part, of the Lord's table. When we drink the cup of wine, we participate in the blood of Christ. When we break and eat this bread, we participate in his body, which was broken for us. We who eat the sacrifices become partners in the altar (1 Cor. 10:1-18). Because there is only one body, partnership in the broken bread makes us, though many, one body. His body was his full and sufficient sacrifice. By it we are bound together in one covenant of obedience.

"So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanc-

tify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. . . . Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God. . . . Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God" (Heb. 13:12-16).

We can see in the New Testament how, like priesthood and sacrifice, the great feasts of the Jewish year were taken into the life of the Christian Church, but transformed in the process.

The most sacred of the Jewish festivals was the combined feast of unleavened bread and of the Passover. Both were commemorations of the exodus from Egypt (Exod. 12:1-28). In every household the old leaven was removed, and only unleavened bread was eaten. In every household the Passover lamb was sacrificed and eaten. With Christ's sacrifice as our Paschal lamb, the whole festival was transformed. Now the removal of the old leaven takes on a new meaning: "Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. 5:8).

Another of the most profoundly significant ceremonies of Israel was the festival of first fruits, when the first proceeds of the harvest were presented in the temple in gratitude for God's bounty, and to sanctify the whole harvest. In this case, too, the new temple gave a new and far deeper meaning to the feast. Christ himself in his resurrection is the first fruits of all the dead. In him is the promise of the whole spiritual harvest; in him thanksgiving ascends to God, and God's blessing descends upon the whole process of reaping (1 Cor. 15:20-23). In him the whole course of man's living and dying receives the assurance of God's final redemption. Those who join their lives to his in a living sacrifice become in turn the first fruits of God's creation. The word which has been planted in their souls

must therefore be received with meekness and must be allowed to produce actions appropriate to its saving power (Jas. 1:16-27). "If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump" (Rom. 11:16).

We see how frequently the earliest church thought of its corporate life in metaphors drawn from the traditional worship of Israel. The church is the temple, the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies. It is a royal priesthood, every member serving as a priest under the high priest. It is both a sacrifice and an altar, unified by the one sacrifice and the one altar of Jesus Christ.

But, as we have seen, this temple is a living, growing thing, not a building in which everything is already complete. One of the conditions of its growth is the reconciliation of enemies within the one body, the reuniting of broken human society within a single household. This household is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus being the chief cornerstone." It is the blood of Jesus which has brought to an end the distance between Jew and Gentile. It is his sacrifice which gives strangers both this hope and this home. It is in him that the structure of the house "is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:21-22).

The goal toward which this growth proceeds is sometimes pictured in terms of Mount Zion and of Jerusalem, the city which was made holy by the presence of Israel's temple. Every Christian church on earth points forward to this "dwelling place of God," where the Lamb stands in the midst of all those who have the name of God on their foreheads (Rev. 14:1-5). The Christian fellowship is always a *pilgrim* fellowship on earth; its very nature tells us that "here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come" (Heb. 13:14).

This Holy City, to which all hearts aspire, is the New Jerusalem, a dwelling place where nothing alienates men from one another or from God. In that city the prophet sees no temple other than the Lord God and the Lamb (Rev. 21:22). The whole city, however, will be engaged in worship. It is this worship of which the Christian community, as a royal priesthood, is a foretaste and a guarantee. Christian worship, in however simple a building, if it be carried out with reverence and awe, is itself a sign of gratitude that Christ's people "have come . . . to the city of the living God . . . and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all . . . and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel" (Heb. 12:22-24).

When Christians at worship become aware of all this, their worship gives them not only a vision of the end of their journey, but also a vision of the "cloud of witnesses" which surrounds them at every step. It gives courage and confidence for running "with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Heb. 12:1-3). It enables them to worship the God of love by loving the brethren. It gives assurance that Christ by his sacrifice as high priest has not only sanctified the church but has also made available an eternal redemption through which all the warring clans of men can be made one. "He is our peace." And to that peace each true congregation is a living witness.

### **Passages for Further Study—God's Temple**

Exodus 12, 33; Leviticus 23; Matthew 26, 27; Acts 7; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 1-6; Hebrews 7-10; Revelation 1-3.



## chapter 6

# ***One Flock, One Shepherd***

*in which are set forth the nature of the Church as a flock, the office of the Good Shepherd, the ministry of the under-shepherd, and the disposition of the Lamb of God.*

ONE TRUE INDEX to the character of any community is provided by its worship. The Christian community is no exception. Its whole life is drawn within the orbit of its praise and thanksgiving, since it views total obedience and total gratitude as the only proper response to God's presence. This does not mean, however, that ritual is superseded and that liturgy is abandoned. The people of God continues to meet together to hear his Word, to eat together at his table, to present the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. These hours spent in common worship nourish its memory and its hope, restore its unity and its sense of purpose.

When the Christian community is called to make its common supplication, few sentences more perfectly describe what that community knows itself to be than the word from the Psalm:

*O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture,  
and the sheep of his hand. (Psalm 95:6-7)*

Century after century, God's people have thus recognized themselves as being his sheep. When this people expresses its common sorrow for its laziness and its fickleness, the confession that springs most naturally to the lips is:

*All we like sheep have gone astray;  
we have turned every one to his own way.*  
(Isaiah 53:6)

In contrast to its own unfaithfulness, it finds unfailing and eternal confidence in the faithfulness of the Shepherd. In his rod and staff it discerns the only adequate comfort:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;  
he makes me lie down in green pastures.  
He leads me beside still waters;  
he restores my soul. (Psalm 23:1-3)*

No poetry has been more often set to music, no pictures more often painted, than those which represent God as shepherd:

*He will feed his flock like a shepherd,  
he will gather the lambs in his arms,  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with young.*  
(Isaiah 40:11)

These pictures have, however, become so common, so frequently used and misused, that many Christians have ceased to ask what they really mean.

What sort of picture of ourselves is given in the word

"flock"? Not a very flattering picture, for sheep are notoriously helpless, dependent animals, forever straying and getting lost. Jesus vividly described his own mission in the words: "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). In this description we may see mirrored the tax collectors, the lepers, the prostitutes, the demon-possessed, the homeless and estranged. They had gone astray like us all; they had turned every one to his own way. The familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand describes this company as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt. 9:36). The disciples did not have enough food for so large a crowd, but their Master made them "lie down in green pastures." He fed this flock like a shepherd, so that none of them lacked food and their souls were restored. When we read the story of Jesus receiving the children whom his disciples had brushed aside, we recall the picture of a shepherd gathering the lambs in his arms (Isa. 40:11).

When Jesus wanted to set forth as clearly as possible the meaning of God's care for his people, he did so in the parable of the shepherd who, when one of his sheep went astray, left the ninety-nine, went out to search for this lone sheep, and rejoiced beyond measure at its recovery (Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:2-7). None of Jesus' promises is more profound than this: "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32). Jesus knew all the crises through which his followers would have to pass. He told them that the sheep would be scattered when the shepherd was struck down (Matt. 26:31); but he also knew that the scattering would lead to the rediscovery of the name of God as their Lord, and of their own name as God's people (Zech. 13:7-9).

It was quite impossible for Jesus to think of this flock without thinking of their Shepherd, God. It was also im-

possible for him to think of his own mission of gathering the lost sheep without associating himself with this Shepherd. By his work for them, by his constant care and personal sacrifice, he became "the great shepherd of the sheep" (Heb. 13:20). No writer saw more fully the glory of this portrait than the writer of the Fourth Gospel. There we find (chap. 10) the most adequate presentation of the enduring relationships between the one flock and its one Shepherd.

He calls them by name, leads them out to pasture, goes before them. They recognize his voice and follow. He watches over their going out and their coming in. His whole vocation is to save them by giving them abundant life. The measure of his love for them is the laying down of his life. This sacrifice is, however, not only the giving up of life, but also the receiving of life—the abundant life of love. Because his love is life, they know him and in knowing him know his Father. Because his will is constantly to draw other sheep into the one fold, the sheep, as they come to understand his love, come to understand also their own continuing mission.

Are there two shepherds—God and Christ? No. Only one. Are there two flocks—the present flock and other flocks? No. Only one. The only division within the fold will result from the intrusion of a false shepherd—a thief, a robber, a stranger, a hireling. What proves the hirelings false is their unreadiness to sacrifice themselves for the sheep. They are ruled more by fears about their own fate than by care for the sheep. They do not enter through the door of redemptive love. They do not know the Father, nor does the Father recognize them. The sheep are frightened and scattered by any shepherd who does not make known to them, in his own self-sacrifice, the genuine love of the Father.

Every flock needs a shepherd. Every flock is known by its shepherd. God's flock is known by the one Shepherd who gathers one flock. In recognizing itself as this flock, the church also recognized its need for "under-shepherds" under the chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4). We see Jesus during his ministry calling these shepherds and training them. Their initial task is set by him: "Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:6). After the resurrection, this limited ministry is changed into a world-wide ministry in the command: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Each disciple, to be sure, remains a lamb sent out into the midst of wolves (Matt. 10:16; Luke 10:3). Yet they are lambs being trained to feed the sheep. They will be scattered when their Shepherd is killed, but he appoints one of them to strengthen his brethren. The training of Peter as a shepherd is completed in the thrice repeated command, "Feed my lambs. . . . Tend my sheep. . . . Feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). One of the key words here is the possessive pronoun *my*. Any sub-shepherd will remember that he is *sub*, a substitute for Jesus, subordinate to Jesus, for the flock belongs only to Him. The sub-shepherd must answer the sharp question, "Do you *love me*?" Feeding and tending the flock is a work of love for Jesus. Only one who loves him will be able to feed his flock.

This stands forever as the true commission of every shepherd, of all Christians who receive the gift to be pastors (Eph. 4:11). They must tend the flock, "not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3). The Holy Spirit has made them guardians of the flock, "to feed the church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood." Some shepherds, to be sure, will turn into wolves. Covetous of

money and power, they will insist on being served rather than serving. They will seek disciples for themselves rather than for the true Shepherd. They will divide and scatter his flock. For this reason, every shepherd must take heed to himself as well as to the needs of his sheep and to the attack of wolves (Acts 20:28-35). Wolves will be known by their inward hunger for self-glory and by their evil fruits (Matt. 7:15-20). The clearest test by which the true pastor can be distinguished from the false is his likeness to the Great Shepherd (Acts 20:28).

This Shepherd, like every pastor and elder, was also a lamb. The blood with which he bought his flock was the blood of "a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). In him is recognized "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36). The source of many such testimonies to Jesus Christ may be found in Isaiah 53. Alongside the portrait of God's Servant is our own portrait: "All we like sheep have gone astray." But our sin is overcome by his sin-bearing, for "on him the Lord has laid the iniquity of us all." Wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, he made intercession for us. The whole work of redemption through suffering, of forgiveness through the self-oblation of the man of sorrows, was quietly accomplished when this lamb was led "as a sheep before his shearers." Over and over again early Christians answered the question, "About whom was Isaiah speaking?" by telling "the good news of Jesus" (Acts 8:27-35). To members of the church it was perfectly natural, as they ate together at the Lord's table, to speak of Christ as our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7).

For one New Testament writer, the most appropriate title for Jesus Christ is just this, "the Lamb of God." The seer of the Book of Revelation speaks thus of him no fewer than twenty-eight times. He loves to emphasize the

sharp paradoxes which are involved in the use of this title. He calls attention to the fact that this Lamb is a shepherd, who guides his flock to springs of living water (7:17; Ps. 23:2). All other shepherds of the flock (the elders) fall down in worship before the Lamb (5:8, 12, 13). This Lamb is also the Lion of the tribe of Judah (5:5). His kingly power, however, is exercised through his blood, his death for others. The Lamb who sits upon the throne is none other than the slain Lamb. In his self-offering lies his power to rule. He *shepherds* all nations with a rod of *iron* (2:27; 12:5; 19:15), so that even earthly kings cower in fear of his wrath (6:15). All history, in fact, is viewed in terms of the continuing warfare between the Lamb that was slain and the Beast who slays, a warfare in which the victorious power is wielded by the Lamb.

Servants of the Lamb who come through great tribulation without becoming disloyal to him wear robes which have been made white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14). They do not love their own lives, but rather give testimony to the power of Christ's love—and this is to conquer the Devil by the blood of the Lamb (12:11). They endure temptation and trials with courage drawn from the Lamb's resources—and this is to wash their robes white in his blood (7:9–14). It is because they worship and serve God day and night in his temple that the slain Lamb feeds them and shelters them with his presence (7:15–17). They are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, celebrated as soon as the "Bride has made herself ready," clothed in the fine linen of the saints, their obedient deeds. The Bride of the Lamb is in fact the Holy City, the redeemed community (21:9f.), in which all the servants of God are at home. Every Eucharist, every observance of the Lord's Supper, among these servants sets forth at the same time the Lamb's sacrifice, the servants' obedience,

the wedding supper and the ultimate marriage of the Lamb and his Bride.

No conception of the church's status could be higher than these visions of a holy community, gathered about the throne in the heavenly temple, singing songs of praise to God and to the Lamb. No conception of the church's mission could be humbler than the seer's, because he pictures the church on earth expressing its worship of the Lamb by patient and faithful sharing in the Lamb's self-offering, by obedient wrestling with all the powers of evil, and by "loving not its own life even unto death." All these things we can see clearly in the ministry of Jesus, as Shepherd, as we have it recorded in the Gospels. The writer of Revelation has simply taken these same simple principles, and interpreted in the light of them the whole life of the universe and God's purpose in it:

"Those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10: 42-44).

The one Shepherd creates the one flock, and calls other shepherds to feed this flock, by laying down his life for the sheep, "a lamb without blemish and spot." The sheep recognize his voice, and follow his guidance in laying down their lives for sheep "which are not of this fold." The under-shepherds follow the chief Shepherd in feeding the flock, in serving it, without trying to rule over it. The unity of sheep and Shepherd, of the Lamb and his Bride, is constituted by a shared love, of which the pledge and the sacrament until the world's end is the Bread broken for many and the Wine poured out for the salvation of the world, and of which the fullness will be revealed only in that day when "the marriage of the Lamb is come."



## **Passages for Further Study—One Flock, One Shepherd**

Psalms 23, 78; Isaiah 53; Ezekiel 37; Zechariah 9–14;  
Matthew 25; Luke 2; John 10; Acts 20; 1 Peter 5.

## chapter 7

### ***Elect Exiles of the Dispersion***

*in which is shown the nature of the Church as the true Israel—of Christians as strangers in this world, but at the same time ambassadors to this world on behalf of Christ.*

**I**F I were to write your congregation a letter which I wished to have read during its meeting for worship, what salutation would be most natural? What greeting would be most readily accepted? I might say "Dear Sirs" or "Dear brothers," and you would have little difficulty in recognizing yourselves. But if I should write: "Greeting to the twelve tribes of the dispersion," how would you react? Or if I should say: "To the elect exiles of the dispersion in the Philippines (or Lebanon or Iran)," would you know at once that I had you in mind, even if you live in one of those countries? No, you would probably decide that the letter had been delivered to the wrong address. Yet that is the way in which Christian authors addressed letters in the first century (Jas. 1:1; 1 Pet. 1:1). And those who received them recognized the address as their own. How strange. Yet why do we find it strange? Perhaps because we

have ceased to think of ourselves either as the dispersion, or as exiles, or as the elect. Let us then explore the meaning of these three descriptions of ourselves as Christian congregations.

### **The Dispersion**

We shall not admit this as our address until we have learned again to think of ourselves as the Israel of God. We have forgotten how often we are summoned to worship by familiar verses from Deuteronomy: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord" (Deut. 6:4).

Both as a confession of its faith and as a recognition of its highest duty, the Christian community has always and everywhere accepted this word "Hear" as addressed to *it* no less than to the old Israel (Mark 12:29f.).

This acceptance, however, implies much more than many of us realize. It implies a full acceptance of the Old Testament as sacred Scripture. It implies that (in a sense) we were "there" when Moses taught his people this first of all commands. It implies a direct and significant connection between the church and Israel. Not only is Israel's God our God, but we are the Israel of which God is the one and only Lord. If God is one, his chosen people are one.

The earliest Christians were proud to claim for themselves this name of Israel. Even Gentiles who had been accustomed to detest the Jews gladly adopted this title for themselves. Paul insisted that Galatian Gentiles belonged to "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16). Abraham is "the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16). The new covenant in Jesus Christ is a covenant between God and the house of Israel (Heb. 8:8, 10). Through their faith, Gentiles receive citizenship in the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12-13).

Obviously, this inclusion of Gentiles within the house of Israel became possible only through a quite new idea

of what it means to be an Israelite. When we say with Paul, "we are the true circumcision" (Phil. 3:3), something has happened to the meaning of circumcision. The physical rite has ceased to determine this meaning. "Neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation" (Gal. 6:15; Col. 3:11). The new creation, indeed, must be spoken of as a circumcision which is not performed with hands. It is a circumcision of the heart (Rom. 2:29). The true Israel is defined not outwardly but inwardly, not physically but spiritually, not by man's action but by God's. Those who belong to this Israel place their confidence not in the flesh, but in the Spirit of God (Rom. 2:25-28; Phil. 3:3-11). Yet this is no easy thing to do. The new circumcision involves nothing less than the death of the old person: In Christ "you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism" (Col. 2: 11-12).

Baptism into Christ is the way in which we come to share in Christ's circumcision. But when we are baptized into him, we are buried with him. And *this* circumcision makes us new creatures, for when we are raised with him we become members of the Israel of God by faith. It is the miracle of faith in Jesus Christ which transforms us into sons of the father of faith, Abraham (Rom. 4:12-25).

Israelites all—that is what we are if we are in Christ. But what kind of Israelites? If we are the twelve tribes, these tribes are those of the Dispersion, those who are scattered throughout the whole world (Jas. 1:1). That is, we are citizens of a commonwealth, but are forced to live for the time being in a foreign country. We are living as the Israelites did during the Exodus wanderings or during the Exile. Our homeland is not the country in which at present we live, but a better country which we are seeking,

“the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14).

## Exiles

Our status as exiles, therefore, is not due to the fact that we live in one country rather than in another. If Bithynian Jews went to live in Judea, or if Indians now resident in Africa went back to live in India, politically they would no longer be exiles. But, if they are Christians, they would be exiles still. Their status as exiles, like their status as Israel, is a matter of faith, of spiritual circumcision, of membership in God’s family. In other words, the whole period of our lives is the time of our exile (1 Pet. 1:17). We do not cease to be refugees by moving to a new country or by changing the calendar. As citizens in the commonwealth of Israel we are aliens in every other commonwealth.

One reason why this is true is that we can no longer give *final* sovereignty to any earthly power. Christians were commanded to honor the emperor, but not to fear him. If they honor him, it is because they owe first and highest allegiance to God rather than to men. And this is something which nations—whether ancient or modern—find it hard either to understand or to accept. Christians can never give unconditional loyalty to any earthly society, because their first citizenship is always a higher one. Sufficient evidence is provided by the long list of witnesses to Christ who in every country of the globe have suffered fiery trials (1 Pet. 1:6), just because faithfulness to God demanded that they should in some way limit their obedience to earthly rulers.

But Christians are alienated from their former *selves* as decisively as from their former countries. Baptism into Christ makes it impossible that their lives should be ruled by the prevailing customs and ideals of the society in

which they live. They can no longer be "conformed to the passions of your former ignorance" (1 Pet. 1:14), "the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul" (2:11). This conformity may include the wild profligacy of evil living and carousing, but it also includes the more deceptive forms of idolatry—self-centeredness, pride, ingratitude, and ambition.

Any society resents those strangers in its midst who do not join in revering the popular idols, or in detesting those whom society has cast out as untouchable. Any society resents a love that loves all men, without considering whether they have deserved to be loved or not; a humility that is not interested in success, and refuses to worship those who are successful; a confidence that is untouched by the anxieties under which other people are suffering. The status of exiles is thus forced on Christians by the ridicule and abuse poured upon them by that same world which considered Jesus a stranger (John 15:18-21).

But "exiles of the Dispersion" do not chafe at such abuse. Even violent persecution is accepted with joy if it is caused by faithfulness to the name of Christ (1 Pet. 4:12-13). It then becomes a part of the sufferings of Christ, which he endured with joy to the glory of God. Made pilgrims by faith, believers join a great procession of pilgrims, whose very exile binds them together on their journey, for they are seeking a single goal. The record of those who have died in every Christian community is a list of faithful pilgrims which begins as far back as Abraham: "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out . . . and he went out, not knowing where he was to go" (Heb. 11:8).

And the list of faithful pilgrims in every century might well end with these words:

"These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and

having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland" (Heb. 11:13-14).

This homeland which they seek is not a vague uncertain mirage. It is the land to which the pilgrims belong as citizens, though now they are in exile. These exiles are not stateless people, without citizenship in any country; neither have they become exiles by having been expelled from their "country of origin." They are exiles whose citizenship is held in the city toward which they move. They are sons of the mother city Jerusalem, the Jerusalem which is "above" and "free" (Gal. 4:25-26).

"Our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

But how do the exiles "await" this Savior? By pressing forward as pilgrims. But also by serving as *ambassadors*. As a citizen of the heavenly commonwealth, every Christian is called to be at once an exile and an ambassador. He is not left alone in the foreign country, without home, without family, without power. No, he bears the authority and power and vocation of an ambassador from Christ. No one was clearer about this vocation than the apostle Paul. This is how he describes our exile: "While we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage . . ." (2 Cor. 5:6-9).

And this is how he describes our work as ambassadors. God made Jesus Christ an ambassador, sending him to take upon himself our sin so that we might become God's righteousness. By sending this messenger, God reconciled us to himself. But this reconciliation takes the form of sending us as "ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us" (2 Cor. 5:18-21). He appoints us as his representatives in the world. He gives to us the ministry of reconciliation, through which the world may learn

that it has been reconciled to God. This ministry requires that the church fulfill a dual role in the world—it must be at the same time a community of exiles and an embassy from heaven. We are called *out of* the world in order to be sent *into* the world. We are the salt of society which both cauterizes and heals. We are the fools who can make many wise. We are the weak who are chosen to shame and to save the strong (1 Cor. 1:18–30).

### **Elect Exiles of the Dispersion**

It is obvious that no citizen of any nation can serve as its ambassador unless he has been duly chosen and appointed. It should be equally obvious that no citizen of the world, at home in its ways of thinking and action, will accept the status of being an exile from that world, unless something beyond his own choosing has happened to him. He must have been called to be an exile here by being chosen as a citizen and ambassador of another country, another homeland. This explains why early Christians, when they spoke or thought of themselves as exiles of the Dispersion, naturally thought at the same time of their appointment by God—their “election.”

This is a difficult idea. All that we can do here is to single out four observations about the use of the word in the New Testament, four accents which are often neglected but which are quite essential for our understanding of the church:

1. The term “election” refers first of all to God’s appointment of *his people*. It is only through the choice of God that the church exists at all. It came into being when God himself took the initiative in creating for himself a family among whom he would dwell. He chose the patriarchs, and in choosing them, chose their descendants (Acts 13:17; Rom. 9:11; 11:28). In both Testaments,



the ground of this choice is clear. It was nothing else but God's free grace. He chose Israel, not because of Israel's wisdom or power or goodness or size, but simply as an expression of his love (Deut. 7:6-8). To be elect is synonymous with *being loved by God*, as a father loves his sons (1 Thess. 1:4). As Christians come to know and experience this love, they come to know and understand God's choice of the church to be the new Israel through faith (Rom. 4:13-25). Those who recognize themselves as "the elect" are bound by that recognition into a single community which extends over the centuries and the continents.

2. It is *in Christ* that God chooses both the church and every individual who becomes his son. Jesus Christ is first of all the Elect, the Chosen One (Luke 23:35; 1 Pet. 2:4, 6). This Christ had the power to bring many sons into God's family by adoption. Each of these sons accepts the truth of Jesus' statement to his disciples: "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). In him we are chosen in love to belong to him and to his family. In Christ this love links all of us *in time* to a purpose of God which has been going forward since the creation of the world. His love links us *in space* to all the other purposes of God which are going forward anywhere in this great universe (Eph. 1:4).

3. God's choice of sons in Christ is so designed as to give them *full confidence* in him without giving them any confidence in themselves. The apostle Paul gives matchless expression to both sides of this truth: "If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" (Rom. 8:31-32; cf. also Luke 18:7).

Our election means that we can have full confidence in God our Father. Nothing whatever can separate us from his love. But election also means that we can have no confidence in ourselves, no confidence in the flesh, no compla-

cency about our goodness or power: "God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong . . . so that no human being might boast in the presence of God" (1 Cor. 1:27, 29; cf. also Jas. 2:5).

Election and complacency never belong together. Sometimes Christians, because they know themselves to be "the elect," have allowed themselves to feel superior to other people. Sometimes, for the same reason, they have regarded it as right to claim special privileges for themselves. But to do either of these things is to blaspheme the God of love. It is the surest way of destroying that fellowship into which God has called us, and into which he is calling all other men.

4. When God calls men, he summons them *for a particular purpose*. He chose the Christian community for a special mission. We cannot understand election if we think of it in terms of privilege; it can be understood only in terms of service. In the Gospel of John, Christ chooses his disciples by "appointing them to go and bear fruit." They bear fruit by loving one another and bearing witness to him. This, in turn, leads to their being hated *by* the world (because they have been drawn *out of* the world); but this very hostility proves that the witness they are bearing is true (John 15:16-27).

God's appointment thus becomes for every believer not a substitute for action, not an exemption from struggle, but a *demand* for fruitful service and a *power* through which that demand can be met. It increases rather than lessens responsibility. Election is another name for God's forgiveness; therefore the elect of God must forgive. Election is a declaration of God's peace; they must therefore let this peace govern their hearts. Election is the choice of men who are poor, foolish, and despised; they must thereafter be clothed in lowliness and meekness. Election means that

their life is now “hid with Christ in God”; they must “put to death therefore what is earthly in you” (Col. 3:1–17). As the elect of God, they are exiles in the world and citizens of heaven. But as exiles they are also ambassadors to the world, instruments of God’s grace and witnesses to his power. No one of them can be true to this responsibility unless he relies perfectly on the Elect Son of God, and unless he takes his stand in perfect oneness with all who have been chosen—the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.

### **Passages for Further Study—Elect Exiles of the Dispersion**

*Election:* Mark 13; John 15; Romans 9–11; Ephesians 1; Colossians 3. *Exiles:* 1 Peter 1, 2; James 1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5; Hebrews 11. *Dispersion:* Israel—Romans 4; Philippians 3; Colossians 2; Galatians 5, 6; Ephesians 2.

## chapter 8

### ***The One New Man***

*in which is set forth the natural oneness of all men in the old Adam, and the spiritual oneness open to all men in Jesus Christ, the last Adam; the ways in which men can pass from the natural to the spiritual, and the consequences of their doing so.*

**T**HERE ARE more than two thousand million individuals now alive on the earth. Even if we forget the uncounted millions who have died and the uncounted millions yet to be born, none of us is really able to think at one moment of so many individuals. It would be easier to count the grains of sand on a large beach than to hold in our minds so large a number of separate human beings.

The census takers of the world have devised various ways of dealing with so many different men and women. One method is to divide the world's population by continents. So many live in Africa and so many in South America. Another way of reckoning groups individuals together by color. There are black men and brown men and yellow men. Another familiar classification is that of nation:

France, Pakistan, Indonesia. Still another is that of religion: 150 million Buddhists, 315 million Moslems, and 50 million Taoists. Each category into which the particular individual is placed is determined by something about him which unites him to others—place of residence, citizenship, color, or religion.

Whatever it is which unites us to one group also separates us from other groups. By inheriting color or nationality we are alienated from those of other color or nationality. By living within the walls of our own kind, as we must, we inherit the hostilities, the ingrained prejudices, which over the centuries have developed between our group and those to which others belong. We instinctively develop a defensive attitude toward what is *ours*, and an aggressive attitude toward what is *theirs*.

The New Testament writers, however, adopted another method for describing both the unity of mankind and the deep divisions within it. They recognized that we must locate the unity that binds all men together on a deeper level than the accidents of geography or history. The unity of all men must be found in that pattern which *every* person carries with him, wherever he lives and however he may be classified in the census. What category includes us all? The American poet is moving in the right direction when he writes:

*Each man who's ever lived and died  
Has all men watching by his side;  
His birth-cry to the startling air  
Foretells their triumph and despair;  
And what he speaks from his death-bed  
Speaks for all the unborn dead.\**

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\* Acknowledgment is made to the Harvard University Press for this quotation from Theodore Spencer's *An Act of Life* (copyright 1944, by the President and Fellows of Harvard College).

## Unities of Men in Adam

The writers of the Bible affirm an ultimate unity of all men as sons of Adam. Consider any man who exists and you will find that at three decisive points his existence corresponds to the pattern already shown us in the first man.

1. God created Adam (man), breathed into him the breath of life, and gave to him the good earth as his place to work, to play, and to worship (Gen. 1:26—2:17). Every man, though a child of human parents, is also a creature of the Creator, the work of his hands. This personal relationship to God is what makes him a man; this is the real basis of all human life. The covenant which God has made with each man is prior to and permeates his kinship to other people, to his family and race and nation. God sets the boundaries for every person's life: he comes from God, is constantly dependent on God, and goes to God (Rom. 11:36). Everything that exists in the world and everything that happens in history brings us into a living contact with the God who made the world, and who controls everything that happens in it (Acts 17:26—27).

2. In Adam we are united in a second way. We have all refused to honor God as our God. We have not been thankful to him at all times and for everything. We have given more glory to creatures than to their Creator. We have placed our own judgment of good and evil higher than his. We have not known or followed the way of peace. We have not loved as God loves. Our tongues have deceived both ourselves and others (Rom. 1:18—3:18). There is, then, a final truth in the statements of the apostle: "sin came into the world through one man . . . all men sinned" (Rom. 5:12).

3. In Adam we are also united in the fact of a common dying. It is an undeniable fact of man's experience that he

dies. Any man who tries to evade this brute fact in his own case is living a lie. It is not only the individual who dies. All human institutions also—states, kingdoms, empires—have the sentence of death written on them from the beginning. Our deaths, one after another, establish a kinship in death. We are one body in that death, which, coming alike to all, wipes out all the distinctions of continent or country or custom.

### Unities of Men in Christ

Now that we have sketched the unities which we have in Adam, we must glance at the unities which the people of God receive in Christ, the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45), the one new man. Exactly like each of us, he lived his life within the conditions of earthly existence at a particular place and time. He was born into a given family, a given race, a given nation, a given religious tradition. He had a given name, as all of us do, a name which marked him off from every other person. But what binds him into fellowship with all the men who have ever lived and died was his sharing in our life as creatures of God, as sinful and dying creatures.

Having said this, we must, in the same breath, confess Christ as the last Adam, the *new* humanity. What makes him the last Adam is his power to create new unities with all men, a humanity born again in a new pattern.

1. Just as the first humanity has its oneness in the fact of *creation*, so, too, the second humanity has a stronger and more ultimate oneness in its *rebirth* as sons of God. His "image" is the image to which they are destined to be conformed (Rom. 8:29). Now they live "in him" and "to him." His grace "abounded for many." They "reign in life through the one man" (Rom. 5:15-17).

2. Their rebirth as sons of God is a rebirth into the

righteousness of God, which much more than balances their sin. "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19).

Christ is not only the source of our life, but is also our wisdom and our righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30). In him a new humanity of forgiven sinners is established.

3. In Christ the oneness of all men in death is replaced by a oneness of all men in life. Death is "swallowed up in victory."

"As by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:21-22).

This new man is the first fruits from the dead. He became a "life-giving spirit." As the first Adam was a living being, formed of the dust and returning to dust, so the last Adam brings the life-giving Spirit of the kingdom of God, a new destiny to be shared by all who belong to him (1 Cor. 15:20, 42-50).

Everything that unites us to Christ incorporates us in this new humanity, this new body. The life of this body is nourished by God's love, as proclaimed in the gospel: "God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. . . . God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us" (Rom. 5:8, 5). So powerful, so creative, so binding, so decisive is this love that nothing whatever can separate any man who is in Christ from it (Rom. 8:31-39).

This love takes the form of stern and strict judgment upon our sins, and also of gracious forgiveness. Even our sins bind us to Christ, since it is through them that we most come to feel our need of him; but his forgiveness, and the faith and peace and joy which flow from that forgiveness, bind us even more firmly to him. When in faith we accept that forgiveness, the grace of Jesus Christ constrains



us to have that mind which was also in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5). This renews "the spirit" of our minds (Rom. 12:2). It empowers us to obey the command: to cease living the life of the old man and to begin living the life of the new (Eph. 4:22-32).

When Christ enters a man's heart, he creates in the "inner man" the power to put off the old and to put on the new—to move from the image of the first Adam to the image of the last Adam.

This journey from the one to the other proceeds by the most radical of all changes, the change from death to life. Whoever is conformed to the likeness of the new humanity dies daily—in a death like Christ's—and is "united with him in a resurrection like his." The new creature becomes new by putting to death whatever is earthly: immorality, covetousness, slander, deceit, malice, pride (Col. 3:1-17).

The line of division between the two Adams, the two humanities, is thus drawn at the place of death and resurrection. This line is drawn by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, a man through whom God reconciled the world to himself. But it is also drawn by the death and resurrection of the believer, which he experiences through faith in Christ, and which is set forth and made real in baptism. It is also drawn by those daily dyings, those daily Christian decisions, which constitute for every believer the embodiment of the love which binds him to his Lord. It is also drawn wherever the church receives and shares in the Lord's Supper. Wherever persons or communities participate in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ, there the new humanity is to be found. He is the one new man; they are being born again in his image. They are united to him by many ties: his grace and power, his mind and spirit, his love and work, his promise and life. When we think of all those who have received this new life in Christ, it is natural to speak of them as his body.

## **Belonging to Christ's Body**

Whatever unites us to him makes us members of his body. Whatever unites us to him makes us members one of another in this body. And this membership does not mean only that certain isolated individuals find their personal hostilities overcome by his love. It means also that all those partial patterns of unity in which men have lived their separated lives are brought together into one pattern of perfect unity in Christ. In him all families become one family, all nations one holy nation, all races one chosen race.

In Paul's day the most bitter hostility followed the line of the age-long distinction between Jew and Gentile. But what happened to this enmity? Jesus Christ took the two—Jew and Gentile—broke down the dividing wall between them, and created in himself one new man by reconciling them both "to God in one body through the cross" (Eph. 2:11-22).

No human wall can stand against this power of the cross. The same power which made of Jew and Gentile one body can also bring together in one body communist and capitalist, black and white, Hindu and Moslem, Jew and Arab.

According to the New Testament, then, the ultimate distinction among men is that between the old Adam and the new, between the humanity which is bound to Adam by the ties of birth, sin, and death, and the humanity which is bound to Christ by the ties of rebirth, righteousness, and life. Faith in Christ is nothing less than confidence that he has unlimited power to continue his work of ministry, until the new fellowship of mankind in him is perfect—both as making men truly one with one another, and as including all men in its scope. In him God will continue to build up the body of Christ: "Until we all attain . . . to mature

manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13).

This *mature manhood* is the maturity and perfection not of each individual but of the whole human race gathered into the perfection of one new man. How is this body of Christ built up in its maturity and its unity? By the cohesive and perfecting power of God's love embodied in the new man: "Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every joint with which it is supplied, when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love" (Eph. 4:15-16).

Wherever this body is being knit together, there is the church. In this community, men abide in Christ, and Christ abides in them. Among them may be observed great varieties—varieties of gifts, varieties of service, varieties of working. But all the varieties are produced by the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God. And all varieties are designed for the common good. All are designed for the knitting together of the one body in love (1 Cor. 12:4-13; Rom. 12:4-21). If some members receive more honorable gifts and others less honorable, the mutual care and concern of each for all and of all for each causes such differences to be forgotten. Each in love shares the joy and sorrow of all other members, each considering the other better than himself (Phil. 2:3). Faith, hope, and love are the gifts which abide. They are the gifts which all members of the body receive in common. If distinctions must be drawn among these, the greatest is love, because it has the unifying power of wiping out all distinctions between what is mine and what is yours (1 Cor. 12:14-13:13). Where this is true, it follows necessarily that no individual can belong to Christ without at the same time belonging to the whole church.

In what sense, then, do we become joined to Christ's body? We may distinguish three ways in which we become one with him.

1. To belong to Christ is to be joined to *his crucified body*. We are baptized into his death (Rom. 6:3-11). Through faith we receive his body in the Eucharist—the body which was broken for us. Through his power we die daily, we proclaim his death by “being given up to death for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:11).

2. To belong to Christ is to be joined to *his risen and glorified body*, the body of life and righteousness. Our separate bodies become temples of the Holy Spirit, “not meant for immorality, but for the Lord.” They are designed to bear witness by their deeds to “the life of Jesus” (1 Cor. 6:13-18; 2 Cor. 4:11). They are included within the promise and hope of redemption. Christ “will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). The power of his resurrection is even now at work in those who “share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death” (Phil. 3:7-11).

3. To become a member of the body of Christ's death *is to be bound into an eternal oneness* with all those for whom he died. To be a member of the body of his resurrection is to be bound into an eternal oneness with all those who shall be made alive in him. He died for all the sons of men, for all who are bound in Adam under the law of sin and death. We must not imagine that his love is limited only to the narrow circle of those who love him in return. He was raised as the first fruits of all who sleep. In him shall all be made alive. We must not suppose that the range of his life-giving power is limited only to the narrow circle of those who already believe in him as the one new man.

The church is the first fruits of all creation, the realm

where the reconciliation of the world is proceeding in obedience to the authority of the head of the body. This body is not yet fully "built up." But it is growing, is being knit together, is being built up, wherever the "old nature" of hostility is being replaced by the "new nature" of love (Eph. 4:1-32).

Jesus Christ was sent on a mission "to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad" (John 11:52). The church continues that mission. All who are gathered eat of one loaf and drink of one cup, and so are themselves made one loaf, one body (1 Cor. 10:17). Christ makes them members of one body in him, members one of another, members of the one new humanity, of the great company of the redeemed whom no one can number (Rev. 7:9). To them all he says, "This is my body." In receiving his body, in being incorporate in that body, they share already in that eternal fellowship and life and joy which he has promised to all them that love him.

### **Passages for Further Study—The One New Man**

Luke 22:1-30; John 6; Romans 5, 7; 1 Corinthians 12-15; 2 Corinthians 3, 4; Ephesians 2, 4; Philippians 3; Colossians 2 and 3.

## ***For Further Study***

THERE ARE many other ways of picturing the bond between Jesus Christ and his people. Below are noted twenty-four of these ways. In each case, references are given which will illustrate the picture and suggest starting points for further study.

God's plantation and field: 1 Cor. 3:9; John 15:1.

God's sowing and harvest: Mark 4; 1 Cor. 3:6-7; Jas. 1:18-21.

The olive tree: Rom. 11:17-24.

The vineyard and the vine: Mark 12:1-12; John 15:1-11.

Fishing net and fish: Mark 1:16-17; Matt. 13:47-50; John 21:4-14.

Salt: Matt. 5:13; Mark 9:50.

Lights and lampstands: Matt. 5:14-16; John 8:12; 1 Thess. 5:5; 1 John 1:5-7; Rev. 1:12, 20.

The day and its sons: John 12:36; 16:23-26; 1 Thess. 5:5; Heb. 3:7-15.

The kingdom, kings, judges: Matt. 8:11-12; 16:19; 25:31-46; Luke 12:32; 1 Cor. 6:1-11; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 1:6, 9.

Bridegroom and bride: Matt. 22:1-14; Mark 2:19-20; Eph. 5:21-33; Rev. 21.

**The Holy City—Jerusalem:** Gal. 4:25–26; Heb. 11:10, 16; 12:22; 13:14; Rev. 3:12; 21:23.

**Fellowship:** Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 1:9; Phil. 2:1; Heb. 2:14; 1 John 1:1–7.

**Fellow workers, fellow soldiers, fellow sufferers:** Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 3:5–10; Eph. 6:10–18; Heb. 10:32–34; 1 Pet. 4:13.

**Stewards, ministers:** Matt. 25:14–30; 1 Cor. 4:1; 12:4–11; 1 Pet. 4:10–11.

**Slaves, freedmen:** Rom. 6:22; 1 Cor. 7:20–24; Gal. 4:1–7.

**Servants, friends:** Matt. 20:26–28; Luke 12:37; 22:26–27; John 15:13–20; 2 Cor. 6:4.

**Disciples, followers:** Matt. 28:19; Mark 8:34–37; Luke 9:57–62; John 8:31–32; Acts 11:26–30; Rev. 14:4.

**Witnesses, confessors:** Matt. 10:32; John 9:22; Acts 1:8; Rom. 10:9–10; Heb. 11:13; 13:15; 1 John 4:14–15; Rev. 12:17.

**Called, chosen, sent:** Mark 3:13–14; Luke 18:7; John 13:16–20; 15:16–19; 17:16–19; Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; Rev. 17:14.

**Children, babes:** Matt. 10:42; 11:25; 18:1–6; 1 Pet. 2:1–3; Heb. 2:13–14.

**Believers, faithful:** John 3, 7; Acts 4, 10; Rom. 4; Gal. 3; Eph. 1; Heb. 4; 1 John 5.

**Saints, the sanctified:** John 17:15–20; Acts 9:32; Rom. 8; Col. 1:21–27; Heb. 2:11; 6:4–10; 1 Pet. 1:2–2:9; Rev. 20:1–9.

**Justified, righteous:** Rom. 5:1–5; Heb. 10:38; 12:23; 1 John 3:7; Rev. 22:11.

**Men who wait and watch:** Matt. 25:1–13; Mark 13:34–37; Luke 12:37–39; Col. 4:2; Rev. 3:2–3.